

Series I
Correspondence,
1932-1973

Box 3, Folder 27

February 23, 1949 -
June 15, 1959

0771

23 February 1949

Doctor Paul Dudley White
264 Beacon St.
Boston, Mass.

Atten: Miss Helen Donovan

My dear Miss Donovan:

Thank you very much for your letter of February 16th wherein you informed me that Doctor White was out of town for the present and would not be available for consultation for the next several months.

I should appreciate a consultation with Doctor Howard Sprague who is well known in this area and who has enjoyed a very enviable reputation. You may inform Doctor Sprague that although I am being retired for physical disability, I seem to be in no way on my back or even remotely appearing to be so. On the other hand, there are slight factors whose appearance has caused the Department to recommend my retirement.

What I am particularly interested in knowing is what I am capable of doing, and any recommended procedures of living which may grant me longer life than I might otherwise expect.

I should appreciate an appointment at the earliest practicable moment, as I have to make some decisions with relation to my own future within the next month.

Sincerely yours,

R. W. Bates

0772

23 February 1949

Dear Mr. Southgate:

I am returning herewith that portion of your scenario which you had left with Captain Ashford. He returned it to me that afternoon, and although he recommended some changes, most of which were minor and have been accepted, some other recommended changes I did not accept, as they were not in accordance with the book. I am sorry that it was necessary for you to leave as early as you did, for had you remained but one half day more, I could readily have cleared up some of the confusion which you seem to have had when you came into my office.

First and foremost, the Battle of Midway as put out by the War College is the approved version, and although some readers may not entirely concur with everything in it, nevertheless what is in it has been studied and approved by a Board headed by Admiral Smith and consisting of Admiral Brown for air, and Captain Sylvester. Not only has everything in the book been accepted but I was commended for my outstanding analysis, and the President of the National War College told me that they were impressed with its "complete fairness." There is no divergence of opinion within the War College excepting in a minor way. Captain Ashford said to me here, "If you don't like my comments, why rub them out."

As an example of the readiness with which I can support everything in the book, I would like to quote several items. One comment which you showed me was that the Japanese search planes got off in accordance with Japanese practice and not necessarily in a haphazard way as stated in the book. This, of course, is absolutely incorrect, as Vice Admiral Nagumo stated--"Our search planes were scheduled to take off at 0430 or 30 minutes before dawn, but their take-offs were delayed as shown below." He then shows a maximum delay of one-half hour for one plane, with the other planes being launched in staggered fashion in between. Another quote to show that the Japanese themselves were critical of Nagumo's operations is plainly shown in the statements of Rear Admiral Takata that "the failure to conduct proper reconnaissance and to obtain necessary tactical information on the location of the American forces was one of the great errors in the battle."

0773

I am commenting on this at a little length, to reassure you that the printed version is correct and not those comments by officers who are not responsible for the book. The only person responsible for the book is Admiral Spruance. I can assure you that in view of his relation to the book, he was very careful to be satisfied that everything in it represented the truth.

When you return up here, as you say in four or five weeks, if any of these points are still troubling you, I shall be most happy to clear them up.

We all enjoyed your presence up here, and the members of the Quendecim Club thought you were a very interesting gentleman. Perhaps you may have something to give them should they be meeting when you are next here. Captain Hart is still grouching at me for recommending him as a speaker.

I hope that you will forgive me for not retyping the scenario left with me, but I thought it best to let you see where I had changed it in order to convey more clearly the thought which the book represents.

I hope that you had a pleasant stay with your mother. Very few of us at our age are lucky enough to have parents living, and so, although I wanted you to stay here with me, I nevertheless could not deny you or her the opportunity of seeing each other.

I also regret that our checkage of the scenario portion which you have with you was necessarily accomplished under such pressure because of the haste. I am afraid that I was under pressure myself. I was irritated that anyone would confuse you as regards the book, because your scenario must represent the book. It must not represent other ideas which had already been rejected after mature deliberation. Even then, had the time factor been greater, the pressure would have been markedly less.

Take care of yourself. With warmest regards from everyone in the office, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

R. W. Bates.

Mr. Howard Southgate
Project Supervisor
U.S. Naval Photographic Center
Naval Air Station
Anacostia 20, D.C.

0774

4 March 1949

Dear Old Swede:

I have wanted to write to you for some time--in fact, ever since I heard that you had been worried a little about your health and had gone to the Naval Hospital in Annapolis for a checkup. However, I have now heard that you are back at Chapel Hill. I am therefore writing you a letter to ask you how you really are. Also, I am writing to tell you about myself and about how I retire on the 1st of May.

I have a heart ailment which was discovered in the Philippines. They tried to retire me on it in September 1946. At that time I would have retired had it not been that both Admiral Denfeld and Admiral Conolly told me that I was going to be promoted that fall as one of King's inequities, and Admiral Denfeld insisted that I get the Board to declare me fit so that they could do it. Frankly, I thought at the time I was fit, although the electrocardiograph showed otherwise. However, last summer some signs began showing up in my legs--edema and the like. I was busted on my annual physical early in November, and appeared before the Retiring Board on January 26th. Theoretically I should be on my way home now, but the Navy Department requested that I accept temporary limited duty here at the War College to try and finish my book, the Battle of Savo Island. As you perhaps know, I have already finished Midway and the Coral Sea, and have received very high approbation indeed. I am writing the critical analyses of the conduct of the commanders of the major naval battles of World War II. Vice Admiral Beary is now endeavoring to get me to agree to stay on longer, provided the medical staff will approve. At present they disapprove, but I am going to Boston on the 14th where I will have a conference with Doctor Howard Sprague, a colleague of Paul White and now President of the American Heart Association. I will know a little more then.

I like very much what I am doing, but I dislike being pushed around by people in high command for whom I have little regard. I am not referring to Beary. He is fine!

I suppose you have had an earful about the last Selection Board from your brother-in-law, Spike. I think that Board did all right, from what I know, with the exception of two bum choices. One, Tommy Binford is no good at all and his selection

0775

caused plenty of raised eyebrows and once again brings forth the idea that the personal choice of commanders-in-chief, in this case Duke Ramsey, has privileges over others despite the Nation's needs. The other, the present Judge Advocate General, who was a King man, cannot have a record which is much good. As for myself, as I wrote you a year ago, I had no interest. I knew that they were not going to promote me, even if I were the ablest officer in the Navy. There is always a reason. In this case, long before this Board met, I got word from Fechteler that I was too old.

I am sorry to see that Forrestal is out. He did his damage when he commenced the youth movement and tossed out of the Navy most of its experience. However, it was over, it was a fait accompli and we had to recover from it. From that time on he was learning, and I thought, was growing daily. Politics doth make strange bedfellows!

Please give my very best to Ibby and to Alice, whom I have no doubt is breaking the hearts of many a young man. As for Buddy, when I saw her last fall, she looked very happy indeed. You must be pleased with your family, both made and acquired.

With warmest personal regards and with hope that you are in very good health, I am as ever,

Your Old Pal,

Captain E.E.Hazlett
109 North Boundary St.
Chapel Hill, N.C.

0776

10 March 1949

Dr. Howard Sprague
1180 Beacon Street
Brookline 46, Mass

Attention: Miss Betty Whitney

Dear Doctor:-

I am sending herewith a certain amount of case history and an electrocardiogram of recent date for your perusal prior to my arrival for my appointment on Monday, March 14th, at 2PM.

I hope that you will find these helpful.

Sincerely yours,

R. W. BATES.

0777

Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island
April 20, 1949

Dear Swede:

I received your letter with a great deal of satisfaction as I had wondered why I had not heard from you. I realized that you had been ill and I began to wonder whether you were still ill or more probably out of town. However, I am now reassured as to your health, which is all important among your many friends.

I don't feel too bad about my impending retirement. I have enjoyed the Navy a great deal and although I consider as a whole I have been harshly dealt with, I nevertheless do not allow that to overcome the many happinesses which I enjoyed in the Navy. I am not leaving the Newport area for the present, because the Navy Department has requested me to come back on duty to finish the Battle of Savo Island. This should take until 1 December. The Medical Staff at the Naval Hospital did not view this with favor but I went to a famed heart specialist in Boston, Dr. Howard Sprague, and he said he thought I could do it provided I did not "blow my top." Evidently, with a heart, one must not show too much wrath or anger but must learn to be calm throughout. This will be my hardest accomplishment but I am learning already to overlook mistakes without rancor.

CONFIDENTIAL

I saw Vice Admiral John Dale Price the other day and he said that both Bill Corn and myself had brilliant records and should properly have been made Admirals long ago. He said that the Board had seriously considered my case and decided against me on the ground that I was so experienced as to make it difficult for me to serve under a Rear Admiral who had been my junior. He said that the Board had made this decision in the cases of Bill Corn and myself to save us that embarrassment. I gazed at John with astonishment as what properly should have been done was to have promoted us and permitted us to retire as Vice Admirals. There is always a reason for everything but this, to me, made no sense at all. I should be interested in knowing what your friend, Spike, has to say in this matter. You need not write it because some day I will see you and we will discuss it.

Weather conditions here in Newport are perfectly swell, though every now and then we revert to winter, as we did yesterday with heavy cold rains. Today is equal to one of California's best.

I am awfully pleased to hear that Alice is coming along so well. I know that you are proud of her and I have no doubt that she is equally proud of you and Ibby. Her interest in midshipmen is not unusual because it seems to me that the same thing obtained when we were midshipmen. There is a glamour about a middy which appeals to intelligent young ladies. (My secretary smiled at this!)

0778

You gave me a big laugh regarding Irv Chambers. His first wife, Cappy, was such a wonderful girl and so understanding of Irv that their marriage was swell. It was unfortunate that Cappy died. Now you tell me that Irv has married a martinet who knocks him down on every occasion and even defeats him at golf. What a wife she must be. Not for me!

My best to all of your family. Warmest personal regards, as ever

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

RWB:ca

Captain E. E. Hazlett
109 North Boundary Street
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

0779

29 April, 1949

Vice Admiral John D. Price, USN,
Vice Chief of Naval Operations,
Navy Department,
Washington, D.C.

Dear John:-

I have just heard that you have been selected to be Vice Chief of Naval Operations. I suspected that this would occur. In fact, we discussed it but a few days ago if you will remember.

I was pleased to see that you had agreed to accept this position. It is of enormous importance today. The security of our Country will be seriously jeopardized if incorrect ideas on the conduct of a future war are permitted to become national military policy. I feel confident that you and Denfeld with popular support will, in the end, succeed in keeping high command thinking "on the beam".

I retire tomorrow. I leave the Service with sincere regret despite some of the rough handling I have experienced on occasions. Needless to say, I have enjoyed my Naval Career to the fullest. Naturally I am sorry that my successes never brought me the two stars which I should have liked to wear but alas! I fear that a man of my positive character will always be shoved aside for those perhaps less capable but probably more amenable. 'Twas ever thus!

Best regards and all wishes for your success and for the Country's welfare with which your career is now forever linked. As ever -

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

0780

13 May 1949

Rear Admiral C.C. Hartman
Bureau of Naval Personnel
Arlington, Va.

Dear Chick:

Thanks very much for your help while I was in Washington. Everyone appears satisfied. Naturally I wanted to come back to complete this work as a Rear Admiral but Bill Fechteler says that it has to be as a Commodore as all billets are full. So I have accepted in accordance with your suggestion for patriotic reasons.

Will you please issue me my orders now so that I may come back from California when I wish. Perhaps around June 25th so that I can check in here for duty on July 1st.

I plan to go home on Monday. My home address is:

727 Para Street
Alameda, California

I hope that you will enjoy your sea cruise. You are entitled to the opportunity and I wish you well.

Thanks for everything.

Very sincerely yours,

R. W. Bates

0781

13 May 1949

Vice Admiral R.B. Carney, USN.,
DCNO Logistics
Pentagon Building
Arlington, Va.

Dear Mick:

As you perhaps know I am enroute to California to spend a month with my aged parents prior to returning to the War College on 1 July to complete the Battle of Savo Island.

During my absence my apartment at 12 Mt. Vernon Street will be empty. So I have written to Bill Fechteler as well as to you to offer the apartment to both of you during my absence. The apartment is not remarkable. However, I have loaned it on several occasions to Reggie Kauffman and Elsa and he found it fine for his purposes.

I should like it very much if you and Grace would take it for a couple of weeks. Perhaps you and Bill can arrange it so you can divide the five weeks while I am away.

The weather here is swell; living costs not too high; you, as well as Bill, have many friends; why not take a rest.

Best to you. As ever,

Your old friend

R.W. Bates

0782

14 June 1949

Dear Walter:

Things have been progressing very happily out here, and I have had a most delightful relaxing period. I have been as far in the mountains as Lake Tahoe and as far on the coast as Monterey. I have visited Admirals Spruance, Turner, Murray and McCormick and found all of them extremely friendly and helpful.

I wrote several letters to Admiral Beary, and the Admiral wrote back and reported to me, as it were, that you were progressing very well, and that he thought you would present me with a lot of very good material for editing. I am glad to see that your work is progressing as well as you had expected, and I am more than pleased that Admiral Beary is as delighted as I am with your ability in the work which we are both dedicated to doing.

I am enclosing herewith a memorandum for my own information but which you might find helpful in clearing up some points which may have arisen in your mind and certainly arose in mine concerning the write-up of this action. The thing that bothered Admiral Turner more than anything else was, as indicated in this memorandum, the question about the searches by Admiral McCain in the afternoon and the fill-ins by Admiral Fletcher.

I certainly hope that you took your leave and have found your new Cadillac the delight on the highway that it is to the eye in front of the house.

Please convey my warmest regards to Mrs. Innis and my appreciations to yourself for your outstanding work.

My orders are worded a little differently than I had hoped. They called me to duty here on 1 July rather

0783

than to report in Newport on 1 July. As a consequence
I will lose about a week in reporting there. Give my
best wishes to all the staff. As ever,

Yours very sincerely,

R. W. BATES

Commander Walter D. Innis, USN
Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island

0784

14 June 1949

Dear Gus:

I received your most welcome letter with a great deal of delight. You are a very loyal friend, and it is wonderful to feel that I have such friendship among people of your kind in Newport. I have only received your letter today because I have been away at Lake Tahoe which, at this time of the year, was beautiful. I think Tahoe for June is much better than Monterey, although this is purely a matter of opinion. Northern California at this season of the year seems to be very fine, and therefore even though business conditions are not too good in some fields, it is difficult for the public to be sunk. I suppose the charming weather conditions fill the air with romance, but I am moving so fast that my success in such fields must remain purely nominal.

My orders to the War College require me to report here in San Francisco on 1 July so I will be a little late in arriving in Newport. Also I have to report for a physical examination at the Mare Island Hospital to see whether the doctors feel I am competent to continue the work I have been doing. I believe that they will agree, with limitations.

I was very pleased to hear that you had elected me a subscriber to the Clambake Club. Naturally I think the club is a very fine club, and I have enjoyed my subscriber membership in the past years. However, I doubt if I will be able to use it too much this year as I am afraid I will be fairly busy, and I am forced to a reducing diet which so far has not been too effective out here. I am delighted that you have decided to admit the three admirals as honorary members, and I am confident that they will feel deeply gratified at your courtesy. The Newport crowd are very thoughtful of others, as I have evidenced so often in my own case, and I am sure that others who have become acquainted with Messrs. White, et al, have arrived at the same opinion as I have.

0785

Take care of yourself. Give my warmest regards to everyone, and tell Clayton Strawbridge that I think he is being very unfriendly to start practicing "Bocci" before his competitors can possibly return from Europe. I suppose he is working on the old adage, "A stitch in time saves nine".

I hope this letter finds Fanny in very fine health. Please give her my best regards.

As ever, your old friend,

R. W. BATES

Mr. Gustave J. S. White
Newport Reading Room
Newport, Rhode Island

0786

15 June 1949

Dear Bill:

I had lunch the other day with our good friend, Sue Smith, and she was delighted not only to see me, which was gratifying, but to speak about Newport. The first persons she asked about were you and Sybil. I told her that both of you were fine and that insofar as was apparent to the eye, Sybil was fully restored to her gracious and charming self. I told her that you were in fine fettle and were, as usual, in the forefront of all activity. I told her that I had received a letter from Bill Whitehouse in which he said, "Whitebait is on the crest".

Sue is fine and appears to be writing a column for the San Francisco Examiner under the heading, "Susan Smith says --". I am to be her guest at the Burlingame Country Club next Sunday for lunch. I hope to renew a few of the old acquaintances there who in years past were so friendly.

Things are going along very well here. I found my aged parents in excellent health considering, and I have wandered around the countryside endeavoring to get myself fit for more service. I don't seem, however, to have lost a single pound, although on occasions I have made stringent efforts. The reason for this is that my friends invite me out, and although I have refused many invitations, nevertheless when I accept one, it destroys a week's devoted labor. You don't know about this, having such perfect curves.

I miss the old pool games and the fellows in the Reading Room, so I look forward soon to being back there again.

Have you heard this story? I heard it over the radio this morning. An Englishman had not been sleeping very well, and he went to the doctor and asked for sleeping pills, which the doctor prescribed. He came back a few days later and said, "Doctor, the sleeping pills are ineffective. What about some of that twilight sleep?" The doctor replied, "Oh no! That's only for labor!" The gentleman replied, "Good Lord! don't we Conservatives get anything any more?"

0787

With warmest personal regards and best wishes to
Sybil and to Hugh, I am as ever

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

Mr. Wm. Whitehouse
Bellevue Avenue
Newport, Rhode Island

0788